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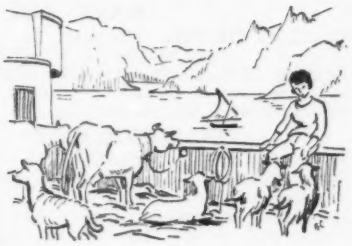

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Illustration by G. Whittam from *The Whale Hunters* (Bell).

THE
JUNIOR BOOKSHELF
DECEMBER, 1954.

Illustration by G. Berger from *Hvem Banker.*

Norwegian Books for Children
Part II

By ASTRID FEYDT.

MAY we now consider modern illustrated children's books? Considering the many artists who are capable of giving us good and attractive illustrations to stories for younger children, it is surprising that for

some unknown reason their interest in this field does not seem to have been aroused to any extent. One suspects, however, that the reward for such work is not highly remunerative. Although this reason may not be the correct one, it is significant that in 1953 there was only one really attractive younger children's picture-book published in Norway. That was a small book written and illustrated by Vigdis Rojahn, who also has illustrated many other children's books during the last few years. Vigdis Rojahn knows how to tell a good story in plain words and to draw pictures engaging the interest of children. Her last book, *Prinsen som grat* (*The Prince who cried*), is a very simple story about a little prince who for the first time in his life discovers a mouse and who goes on crying when it disappears. One of her other picture-books, *"Julegranen"* (*The Christmas tree*), has current interest as it tells of the Christmas tree sent to London every year from Norway. Vigdis Rojahn always creates both in text and drawing a real fairy idyll, charming without being mawkish, humorous without being vulgar.

Another of our younger artists who also has a special gift for drawing and writing for children is Thorbjörn Egner. His name is known by all Norwegian children from his wireless talks and programmes. He has produced some striking picture-books and two charming song books with his own illustrations. In addition he has given us really wonderful textbooks for infant schools, which might well interest English teachers. Thorbjörn Egner has made many younger Norwegian children acquainted with *Winnie the Pooh* as he has used the translated books about *"Ole Brumm"* as we call him, for his broadcasting programmes.

Then we have Fridtjof Soelen, who to some extent is influenced by Walt Disney in his quite charming pic-

ture-book *En modig maur* (*A brave ant*). But I believe his best picture-book was made during the war. The title of this book is *Snorre Sel* with direct hints regarding the German occupation. All patriots were encouraged in their resistance by reading and looking in this book. The hints, however, were not understood by the Germans, and the book was therefore not confiscated.

In 1950 Inger Hagerup, who is best known for her superb poems and some very good broadcasting plays, wrote a book of nursery rhymes with lovely illustrations by the young artist Paul Gauguin (a grandson of The Gauguin). The rhymes are loved by the children who learn them by heart and want to hear them over and over again.

In Norway we have had very few collections of nursery rhymes compared with England and America. In 1936 was published the first good collection by the children's librarian Rikka Deinboll. The book was a great success and in 1952 her second collection *Hvem banker?* (*Who is knocking at the door?*), was published. This last book is very artistically illustrated by a promising young artist, Grethe Berger.

One of our critics of children's books, Sonja Hagemann, has expressed her opinion that children's literature has become a solid schoolmaster literature, which might convey the impression to many authorities that most writers are more interested in facts than fantasy. Although there is no doubt some truth in this statement, it is not altogether accurate. There is plenty of room for this kind of children's book provided the facts recorded are accurate and are well written. Perhaps the fear that this kind of literature will supersede imaginative literature is too much exaggerated: books that stimulate a child's

imagination, as real literature should do, must keep pace with informative books, or what some might term factual fiction, and then no harm will come to the books of imagination. For special use, however, these factual books are justified, and it should be noted that some of them are quite artistically written. Amongst the best of these instructive books are stories by Odd Bang-Hansen, Odd Brochmann, Haakon Lie, Aimmé Sommerfeldt and Jo Tenfjord.

Odd Bang-Hansen, a modern author who is well known for five novels, describes the activities of two twins, Tom and Mette, who explore things. In one book it is Archaeology, in another the Alphabet and in a third Historical Events during the Centuries. Especially his first book about the twins, *Tom og Mette i fjellet* (*Tom and Mette in the mountains*), gives a good description of life in the Norwegian mountains during summer time. Odd Bang-Hansen has with his Tom and Mette books won several of the prizes offered for children's instructive books.

Odd Brochmann, a professor in Architecture, illustrates his children's books himself. In his two stories about Marianne, a small Norwegian girl, he gives the readers a lot of information about what really goes on when a child is taken into hospital, or what happens when you post a letter. These books, *Marianne pa sykehus* (*M. in hospital*) and *Marianne far brev* (*M. gets a letter*) are most charmingly written and illustrated. Perhaps his best book is *Treklöveret* where a Norwegian girl, Kari, a Swedish boy, Göran and a Danish boy, Kai, tell, in their own language, what happens during a visit to their friends in the two other countries.

Haakon Lie has written a very simple animal story, *Ekorngutten,* about life in the forests. The

author here has succeeded in pointing out that real life often is just as wonderful as fiction, if not more so.

Aimmé Sommerfeldt has written many quite good juvenile books. One of her best I would like to mention in connection with the instructive fiction for children is entitled *Bare en jentunge* (*Only a girl*), and the story is of interest also from a cultural historical point of view. It tells of life in a typical Christiania (Oslo) family about 1850 with the young daughter Tonia the main character, who is fighting against old traditions and prejudices about becoming an actress.

Jo Tenfjord (a children's librarian who before the war wrote an article about Norwegian children's books in this magazine) has had a great success with her book about U.N., *Venner verden over* (*Friends all over the World*). Here Mrs. Tenfjord in an amusing way tells children the great idea behind The United Nations linked up with the story about two Norwegian children.

Of the two thousand odd books produced yearly in Norway for children a high percentage are translations, and we thus get many translated English books for our children. It might interest you to know which of them have been most popular.

One of the stories for younger children that has become a great success is, of course, *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, and, as mentioned above, the books about Winnie the Pooh. We have only recently had our first free translation of *Mother Goose* and some of your nonsense books as well. In Norway we do not have books similar to, say, *Mary Poppins,* and it took some time before our children got used to this type of book. The Children's Hour programmes have, however, used many of these books, and now the children, having got used to them, enjoy them more. One of the

Illustration by O. Brochmann from *Treklöveret*.

first of these nonsense books to be translated was Erik Linklater's *The wind on the moon,* followed by the two books about *Mary Poppins* with the original illustrations. J. M. Barrie's two stories about Peter Pan and the classics *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the looking glass* are now translated. Other English classics which our children read with utmost interest, are of course, *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels,* Kipling's *Jungle-Books, Robin Hood* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* all of them having reappeared after the war in new editions.

It is not possible in this survey to mention many of the translations for adolescents published after the war. English books that have been popular both amongst the girls and boys and recommended by our children's librarians and our critics are for instance : *The family from One End Street* by E. Garnett, *The Otterbury incident* by C. D. Lewis, *Redshank's warning* and *Two fair plaits* by M. Saville and *Wagon for five* by D. Severn.

I think it is most important for children to get an opportunity to read other countries' children's books and I do hope that we also in the future will get many translations from English. The children in Norway start learning English from their twelfth year and after two years usually are able to read simple English without difficulty. But then of course so many of the English books that might interest them are not written in simple enough English. So even if our children learn some English, it is still very important to have the translations as well. Perhaps, too, English children would enjoy some of our books which are original, both in theme and style. This suggestion is under consideration and if a few books translated into English are published, it will be interesting to see how they are regarded by English readers.

⋆ The Birth of Madeline

By LUDWIG BEMELMANS.

THERE is one life that is more difficult than that of the policeman's and that is the life of the artist.

I have repeatedly said two things that no one takes seriously, and they are that first of all I am not a writer but a painter, and secondly that I have no imagination. It is very curious that, with my lack of these important essentials, the character of Madeline came to be. It accounts perhaps for her strength; she insisted on being born. Before she came into the world I painted. That is, I placed canvas or paper on an easel before me and made pictures. I found in this complete happiness and satisfaction.

The unfortunate thing about painting is that the artist must exhibit, and at exhibitions, along with his work, exhibit himself; that he has to see his work, which is as his children, sold; see it wrapped up and taken away. I felt sorry for many of my pictures and those of other painters. I wish that there were a way of acquiring dogs or paintings other than by walking into a store and paying for them. The art market, then, the faces of the people who come and look at pictures, the methods of arriving at success, which entail self-advertisement and the kissing of hands, were not my dish.

I looked for another way of painting, for privacy; for a fresh audience, vast and critical and remote, to whom I could address myself with complete freedom. I wanted to do what seemed self-evident—to avoid

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⋆ Reprinted by kind permission of *The Horn Book Magazine of America* and The Viking Press Inc., the American publishers of the Madeline books.

sweet pictures, the eternal still lifes, the pretty portraits that sell well, arty abstractions, pastoral fireplace pictures, calendar art, and surrealist nightmares.

I wanted to paint purely that which gave me pleasure, scenes that interested me; and one day I found that the audience for that kind of painting was a vast reservoir of impressionists who did very good work themselves, who were very clear-eyed and capable of enthusiasm. I addressed myself to children.

You will notice in Madeline that there is very little text and there is a lot of picture. The text allows me the most varied type of illustration: there is the use of flowers, of the night, of all of Paris, and such varied detail as the cemetery of *Pere la Chaise* and the Restaurant of the *Deux Magots*. All this was there waiting to be used, but as yet Madeline herself hovered about as an unborn spirit.

Her beginnings can be traced to stories my mother told me of her life as a little girl in the convent of Aloetting in Bavaria. I visited this convent with her and saw the little beds in straight rows, and the long table with the washbasins at which the girls brushed their teeth. I myself, as a small boy, had been sent to a boarding school in Rothenburg. We walked through that ancient town in two straight lines. I was the smallest one, but our arrangement was reversed. I walked ahead in the first row, not on the hand of Mademoiselle Clavel at the end of the column.

All this, as I said, for many years hung in the air and was at the back of my mind. Madeline finally began to take shape in France, where I had gone to paint. My daughter Barbara was about Madeline's age when we went to the *Isle d'Yeu* for a summer vacation. This was then an island without any preten-

sions, and has since become famous as the place of detainment of Marshal Petain. There was the usual *Hotel des Voyageurs* and the *Cafe de la Marine.* The house we rented was twenty-five dollars for the season. It had its own private beach and the beds were always full of sand. A few miles away lived a man who owned a few lobster-pots and a fishing boat, and I cycled there regularly to buy the makings of a bouillabaisse or a fish stew.

One day, pedalling along the road home with the sack of sea food over my shoulder, both hands in my pockets, and tracing fancy curves in the roadway, I came to a bend which was hidden by some pine trees. Around this curve, coming the other way, raced the island's only automobile—a four horse-power Super-Rosengart belonging to the baker of Saint Sauveur, the capital village on the island. This car was a fragrant, flour-covered bread-basket on wheels. I collided with it, and it threw me in a wide curve off the bicycle into a bramble bush. I had taken the car's door-handle off with my arm and I was bleeding. I asked the baker to take me to the hospital in Saint Sauveur, but he said that according to French Law, a car that has been involved in an accident has to remain exactly where it was when the crash occurred so that the gendarmes can make their proper deductions and see who was on the wrong side of the road. I tried to change his mind, but he said: "Permit me *alors* Monsieur; if you use language like that it is no use at all to go on with this conversation."

Having spoken, he went to pick up his *pain de menage* and some *croissants* that were scattered on the road, and then he spread the branches of the thicket to look for the handle of his Super-Rosengart. I took my lobsters and went to the hospital on foot.

After I had waited for a time an old doctor came with a cigarette stub sticking to his lower lip. He examined my wound, cleaned it, and then with a blunt needle he wobbled into my arm. *"Excusez moi"* he said, "but your skin is very, very tough." I was put into a small, white carbolicky bed, and it took a while for my arm to heal. Here was the stout sister that you see bringing the tray to Madeline, and the crank on the bed. In the room across the hall was a little girl who had had an appendix operation, and, standing up in bed, with great pride she showed the scar to me. Over my bed was a crack in the ceiling, that had the habit of sometimes looking like a rabbit. It all began to arrange itself. And after I got back to Paris I started to paint the scenery for the book. I looked up telephone numbers to rhyme with appendix. One day I had a meeting with Léon Blum, and if you take a look at the book, you will see that the doctor who runs to Madeline's bed is the great patriot and humanitarian Léon Blum.

And so Madeline was born, or rather appeared by her own decision.

Now we come to the sequel. In this story Madeline shares the pages with a dog. This dog came about in a strange way. My wife's parents live in Larchmont, and in a house next door to them is a family of outwardly respectable folk—that is, no one in that solid community would suspect that this quiet and respectable suburban house was occupied by a poet. Her name is Phyllis McGinley and she writes for the New Yorker.

She has two little girls, and they said, "Why don't you write another Madeline?" So I offered them fifty cents apiece if they would give me an idea, for I was paralysed with lack of imagination. The children did

not even go out of the room. They came with hands held out, and after I had paid them they stated the plot: "There's a dog, see—Madeline has a dog. And then the dog is taken away but it comes back again, maybe with puppies so all the girls can have dogs."

That was tight and clever dramatic construction, and now there remained the dog to find. I said, "What kind of a dog?" "Oh, any kind of a dog." I went back to Paris and started to look for any kind of a dog. And of that breed Genevieve is a member.

I had a studio at the time in a house on the Seine at number one *Git le Coeur,* and I walked down to the quay and promenaded along there. Under one of the bridges there lived an old man with his dog. He loved it very much and he combed its fur with the same comb he did his own hair, and they sat together watching the fishermen and the passing boats. I started to draw that dog, and observed it. It loved to swim.

I now had the dog and I sat along the Seine, and thought about the new book. But as yet there wasn't a plot I could use, and the little girls who might have done it for me were in America.

Then one day something happened. An object was floating down the Seine, and little boys ran along the quay, and as the object came near it turned out to be an artificial leg. One of the little boys pointed at it and said. *"Ah, la jambe de mon Grandpère."*

At that same moment a long line of little girls passed over the bridge des Arts, followed by their teacher. They stopped and looked, holding on to the iron rails with their white gloved hands. The leg was now very close, and the dog jumped into the Seine and retrieved it, struggling and pulling it ashore by backing up the stones.

There suddenly was a great vision before me. The plot was perfect.

There are many problems ahead. Who are Madeline's parents ? Who are the other girls, what are their names, what new disaster shall Mademoiselle Clavel rush to ? The next Madeline on which I have been working for two years concerns a boy called Pepito, the son of the Spanish Ambassador who lives next door to the little girls and is a very bad hat.

I'm looking for him now. That is, I've been to Spain three times and searched for him and for his house. As yet nothing has come up, but with patience it always does, for somewhere he is, lives and breathes. The portrayal of life is the most important work of the artist and it is good only when you've seen it, when you've touched it, when you know it. Then you can breathe life on to canvas and paper.

Illustration by S. Hughes from *April Fools* (Collins).

The New Books

FOR LIBRARIANS

THOMPSON, J. (Ed.) *Books for boys and girls. 3rd ed.*
297 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. . . Ryerson Press $7.50

Under the enlightened guidance of Lillian Smith the Boys and Girls Division of the Toronto Public Library compiled two earlier lists, the last in 1940, which contained the cream of current American and English books, helpfully annotated, and given a special cachet by the approval of the young borrowers of Toronto. The present list, made under the supervision of Miss Jean Thomson, has the merits of its predecessors in presenting a sound basic list of standard works, and has been able to bring buying information up to date, and to add publication dates. It has eliminated much that is now unobtainable, but has also removed some admirable titles still available in America, and often in England as well. Of course, there is a great danger today of offering too much, but neither that risk nor non-importation would seem to account for some omissions. Of some 1,500 entries (less than 650 available in England and barely 200 of these added since the 1940 edition) less than 750 are fiction and folk-lore; over 500 books in this class have been dropped since 1940, not quite half that number have been added, of which about 90 have English editions. The omissions suggest that few of the better English productions reach Canada, and not many of the American crop, for the new American titles are often rather weak contributions. Non-fiction is better served; the lists have been weeded and strengthened and seem more representative. It is interesting to note that the largest number of English titles occur in the lists for Nursery Books, History and Poetry, while of books published since 1940 only Science titles seem to have been shared to any striking degree by the English and American explorers.

No attempt has been made to assess recent adult fiction which may be enjoyed by young readers, and there is some inconsistency in the entries, some sequels being annotated separately, and others being hidden in the first annotation, and some confusion in author entries for Nursery Rhymes and the Odyssey. Otherwise the arrangement is clear, the index is excellent, the illustrations imaginatively used, but the application more strictly Canadian than heretofore.

PICTURE BOOKS

HOYLAND, R. *Ethelbert: the tale of a tiger.* Illus. by the author. 32 pp. 9¾ × 7½ boards. Collins 7/6

At first glance this seems to be yet another of those silly picture books about an improbable and overdrawn animal which come out so often. A closer look reveals that this is that rarest of books, the picture book of characters. It is no Babar or Ferdinand, but it has some of the qualities of those giants, particularly a certain self-absorption. The author is deeply concerned with her creation, and has no time for sly and self-conscious glances at the audience. She has a nice sense of fun and a liking for bold sweeping lines which shows confidence and vigour. Some younger readers may be puzzled by her habit of drawing her narrative horizontally, so that her hero appears as many as three times in the same picture. However, they are nearer than adults to the primitive art from which this mannerism is derived. I think they will like the gaiety and serious nonsense in this story of a tiger who liked to swim.

HUTTON, C. *A Picture history of great discoveries.* Illus. by the author. 62 pp. 11½ × 8¼. O.U.P. 12/6

As an illustrated outline this is an excellent piece of work. Not only are the illustrations, in the form of scenes, maps and panoramas, striking and accurate but the text is lucid and direct and though much broken up by the format of mingled picture and print, never loses its thread or seems divorced from its pictorial complement. If one criticism may be offered it is that some explanation, or at least a labelling, of the navigational instruments illustrated might have been included. Since their use and development is not included as a contribution to the general story they might well have been omitted. It ought to be emphasised perhaps that this is not necessarily a book for the very young reader. Its material and treatment are quite mature.

ROWAND, P. *It is night.* Illus. by the author. 32 pp. 10 × 7½ boards. . . . Bodley Head 7/6

There are good beds for everyone, for a bear, a duck, a rabbit, an elephant, and many others; but they all sleep in the bed of one small child. This very charming and simple picture-book comes, presumably, from America; there is, however, no trace of the bad taste which disfigures so many recent books from this source, and only the slightest trace of the

prevalent sentimentality. Nearly every very small child will enjoy the ingenious idea and the appealing pictures; some may find it is the first book of which they read every word unaided. A very warm welcome to *It is night*.

FOR CHILDREN UNDER TEN

EAGER, E. *Half magic*. 184 pp. 8 × 5. Macmillan 7/6

At the beginning this fantastic story promised well, with the adventures of some children when they picked up a lucky coin. Their adventures follow too fast and become muddled. Quick, smart and funny, the story will carry the child reader along but it has nothing of permanent value and as a story of magic falls far below a number of English stories with a similar interest.

MATCHETT, G. *Suzanne goes to market. Suzanne goes to Brittany*. Illus. by G. S. Fletcher. 30 pp. 8¼ × 6 boards. . . . . Harrap each 6/6

These are little stories, in parallel pages of English and French, about a French girl and her everyday adventures. Nothing exciting happens, or is intended to happen, but the stories give a good idea of ordinary life in France. Mr. Geoffrey Fletcher's excellent water-colours, which appear on every page, reinforce the lesson of the text; they have a lively and individual quality. This is an interesting educational experiment, in which colloquial French and fine pictures make a direct and agreeable appeal to young readers.

NEURATH, M. *The Wonder world of long ago*. Illus. 36 pp. 8½ × 7½. . . . . Parrish 7/6

This book consists of a series of coloured drawings of extinct animals, designed on attractively simple lines and furnished with a straightforward letterpress, the whole intended to be an introduction to the emergence of life on the earth, and to the variety of forms which it has taken. On the whole, it is adequate to its purpose, though perhaps a child likely to be interested in this kind of material in the first place might be expected to be able to digest something a little more solid.

RAE, G. *Mary Plain goes Bob-a-Jobbing*. Illus. by I. Williamson. 120 pp. 7½ × 5½. Routledge 5/–

Mary Plain, the lively little bear who skips merrily and fantastically through book after book is an amusing and enter-

taining creature, although her adventures are merely a series of well meant but mischief-making pranks. Here the incredible bear takes on a variety of jobs that will earn her shillings for the Cubs and each job becomes a somewhat chaotic affair. Each tale moves quickly and glibly along and the light entertainment will appeal to younger readers who can share the fun.

ROOKE, D. *The Australian twins.* Illus. by Biro.
192 pp. 8 × 5½. . . . . Cape 6/–

As one whose early reading of the Perkins' twin books was inspired chiefly by the pictures, my memory of the texts is uncertain, but the characters were certainly younger, and it seems likely that the foreign ways were more skilfully introduced. Lucy Fitch Perkins must have hunted up local colour and written largely to teach, but her pleasure in people gave the stories an air of pleasure rather than duty. In the new edition to the series, excitements seem to be superimposed on task-work. Odd terms are used without explanation, except for an overlarge glossary hidden at the end of the book, and while careful reference is made to various aspects of life in New South Wales, the vastness and strangeness of the landscape simply doesn't emerge. The need for horses is always appealing, and Uncle Ben, the black sheep of the family, with his hearing-aid and reluctance to marry his fiancée, shows some attempt at character creation. But there is an unconvincing and inconclusive plot and even the old overworked (and often questionable) by-plot of the wrong dog being threatened as a sheep-killer, which is matched by the cliché-ridden language of the whole. The drawings use a slightly similar technique to the Perkins' but lack their simple sturdy attraction.

TODD, B. E. *Earthy Mangold and Worzel Gummidge.*
Illus. by J. J. Crockford. 200 pp. 7½ × 5.
Hollis & Carter 7/6

The new Gummidge book precedes the others in time—Earthy Mangold is put together in the opening chapter, and still feeling herself a bit of hawthorn hedge, decides to take Gummidge's advice and become human before attempting the higher duties of a scarecrow. This promising idea is not too well followed through, and some of the catch-phrases useful in broadcasts (like Gummidge's "stands to reason") are repeated too often in print, but the scarecrows of Scatterbrook continue to delight, and new creations are up to standard. Mrs. Bloomsbury-Barton is already much in evidence, but John and

Susan have not yet arrived, their function being filled by a little girl from Kenya. The adult humans include a pleasant Captain, a well-meaning but trying lady who thinks she understands the child world, and a retired but still conscientious Nanny. They are deftly handled in their dealings with each other, but the rather wholesale introduction of the scarecrows into human affairs has always been a weakness in this series, and seems somewhat unnecessary when they are so satisfactory by themselves. Some of the conflicts in the present book seem contrived but the scarecrows on their own are the real justification for all, and their conversations are remarkably inventive and humorous, and invite quotation. The new illustrator seems promising.

VALLANCE, R. *Timmy and Bingo.* Illus. by J. Johnson.
96 pp. 7½ × 5. . . . . Harrap 4/6

Altogether too mild and pointless, this new book about Timmy and his seaside holiday doesn't conjure up much sense of place or people, and will add little to the listener's appreciation of either life or literature. The dog Bingo plays a very small part, appearing mainly as a nuisance to be shut out. Timmy's artless remarks seem aimed at adults rather than to other 5-year olds, and his triple negatives and frequent comments on the kindness of others tend to cloy, while 7 year old Roger's schoolboy slang is hardly the sort to be encouraged in the read-aloud-to age. It seems likely that smug superiority to Timmy's baby-talk and concepts is also being encouraged, an even less forgivable trick on the author's part.

FOR CHILDREN FROM TEN TO FOURTEEN

ARNOLD, R. *The True book about Commandos.* Illus.
by F. S. May. 144 pp. 7½ × 5. . Muller 6/–

The Commandos are now a legend that fully deserves embodiment in a comprehensive account of their contribution in World War 2. Mr. Arnold makes quite clear to the reader the nature and purpose of the Commandos organisation and explains how their morale was built up. Having seen them established he traces their achievements through their major exploits in all theatres of the war, not omitting the spectacular tryouts which preceded any reconnaissance in force. For young readers the book should perform at least one valuable service since it removes the mistaken impression that these men and units were merely ruthless and indiscriminating 'toughs'.

BENARY, M. *The Ark.* 281 pp. 8 × 5¼. Macmillan 8/6

How many readers of *Little Women* remember that it was set in a grim post-war period? The poverty of the March family is more evident, but it is the richness of character, incident, and above all, of spirit, which makes their story memorable. The same kind of feeling is left by this German story of a refugee family whose happy life in Pomerania has been overlaid by successive war and post-war calamities, who begin the book making a brave new start in two attic rooms in a bomb-scarred town, and close it, with even higher hopes for the future, in a converted railway carriage on someone else's farm.

Mrs. Lechow, like Mrs. March, is a woman of parts, and her four children are lively and intelligent, eager to learn, and able to make a great deal out of next to nothing. Fourteen-year-old Margret is the central figure, but the others are made equally real, and their problems and friends provide a surprisingly comprehensive picture of post-war German life. Margret's main problem is finding her place in the new surroundings which have something to offer each of the other children. When she finds her niche, as kennel-maid on Almut's farm, the author has full scope to show her feeling for animals and the countryside; throughout the book she communicates her pleasure in family life and in the strength and promise of young people, developing and maturing. The people are made vivid, almost visible, especially merry Mrs. Almut, and little Hans Ulrich, who might be about seven but has no past, and not much of a present until the coming of the Lechows. There are several very moving Christmas chapters, and as an added delight, rather than a climax, the safe return of first Mrs. Almut's son and then Dr. Lechow from Russian camps, a return made probable simply because it hasn't been made a necessary pivot of the story. These people can stand on their own feet whatever happens, or wherever they might live—even the hint of coming romance between young Almut and Margret could be ignored by such well-established characters. Altogether, then, a book to grow on, with much wisdom and compassion to offer re-readers in particular. It's good to think that young readers in Germany, England and America may all share the adventures of the Lechows, even as they have long shared the March family, for such contacts can do more than many treaties and pacts and good-will missions.

BINNS, A. *Sea Pup.* Illus. by R. Candy. 215 pp. 8 × 5. . . . . Bodley Head 7/6

The 'sea-pup', a woolly white orphaned seal, who is hero of this story, was found in Puget Sound by Clint Barlow, a boy who loved the sea and all that lived in it. Clint's father said the pup would die; Clint not only reared it but made it his friend. Buster lived as part of the family, along with the dogs, learning in due course to swim, avoid killer whales, drink from the cows as well as from a feeding bottle, and, as is natural with seals, learning to catch salmon the fishermen wanted. The adventures of boy and seal are very well told. Credulity is not unduly strained, for the author himself grew up in Puget Sound and presumably knows his seals. The weakest part of a lively tale, which also gives some useful information about ocean life, is its ending. Buster, the seal, having got beyond the boy's management, is sent to a Zoo, a situation which is over-sentimentalised. A stronger finish would have been to give him his chance in the sea, "let him be a seal" as some wise person suggested. With a little more realism this could have been a valuable lesson in courage and understanding for young animal owners.

BROWN, P. *The Windmill family.* Illus. by M. L. Foster. 233 pp. 8 × 5½. . . Nelson 8/6

The Channing family, Celia, Kate, Colin and their Mother and Father live in a windmill, and to them it is a much loved home. Their father, however, is a writer whose income is little and spasmodic and it seems that the mill must be sold so that they might live in a suburban villa while Mr. Channing works in the local bank. This idea is abhorrent to each one of them and Kate and Colin determine to do something about it. An opportunity occurs when 'Puffin', a schoolfriend of Colin's who is also a runaway Indian Prince turns up at the mill. A reward is being offered for news of his whereabouts by his government and 'Puffin' decides to let Kate and Colin have the benefit of the reward if they will secretly hide him until the school holidays are over. Unbeknown to the rest of the family he is hidden in the mill and there is much excitement before the reward becomes theirs and the mill is saved. Miss Brown starts well. There is a sharp gay picture of the Channing family and their unusual home, and something of the potency of that first scene flavours the whole of the book, but

the lively chatter and the new ideas become submerged in a gathering of clichés of speech and action. The author plods steadily and sincerely on but her first flash of vision is lost.

BYERS, I. *Tim of Tamberly Forest.* 184 pp. 7½ × 5.
Parrish 8/6

Timothy Digby runs away from his home in the East End of London to find a job in Tamberly Forest. The author's own love of trees is given to Timothy and her own knowledge slowly imparted to him as he works in the forest. There are some sidetracks in the story connected with Timothy's home and the people he meets in his new environment. The tale runs along smoothly without the incredible hazards common to many of its type, but at times one feels that things are a little too cosy and apt to fall a little too neatly into place. The result resembles the artificiality of a tidy and perfect doll's house. However there is plenty of information and enthusiasm and a lively scene interpreted in clear and concise, if but ordinary, prose.

DALE, N. *The Secret motor car.* Illus. by S. Hughes.
192 pp. 7½ × 5. . . . . Lane 8/6

An unpretentious story with a pleasant holiday air, a reasonably-contrived mystery, and an alert, cheerful group of children, featuring Ginger and Peter, who don't refer too pointedly to earlier exploits, or indulge in the painful "humour" and boastings of so many young detectives. Some of the incidents share the dubious quality of third-rate mysteries, for the central idea of the children renovating a long-hidden automobile in order to drive it themselves, and their occasional resentment at adult interference in 'their' mystery are the kind of things hackwriters have made very suspect. But their enterprise in bringing the car back to life, and the pleasant relationships of children and adults make them more engaging sleuths than most, and their clues are found more by chance than by super-adult detection. Light and skilful, with illustrations to match.

FREEMANN, W. *Biographies: scientists and inventors.*
119 pp. 7½ × 5. . . . . Pitman 7/6

The slight appearance of this volume belies the considerable amount of interesting information compressed into its pages,—compressed, it may be added, but not distorted. The eighteen worthies are described in lively fashion and their personalities as well as their achievements are represented with

a regard for proportion quite remarkable in the space. The better known geniuses such as Arkwright, Telford, Davy, Stephenson and Faraday are included with some who tend to be forgotten such as Smeaton, Jenner, Babbage, Bessemer and Siemens.

HOGG, G. *The Granite men.* Illus. by Maz. 224 pp.
8 × 5¼. . . . . Nelson 7/6

A poorer-than-usual attempt to enliven or disguise a guide-book tour of some locality (in this case Brittany) with a pretence of mystery, with an unlikely start, a weak set of clues, loose ends all over the place, and a cheating finale, in which the mystery is revealed as an attempt to intrigue trippers into admiring the countryside. The trippers include Mr. Hogg's usual set of young people, headed by the unbearable Jonty (who is obviously going to become a most insufferable man), who are trippery indeed in their insular and commonplace reactions. The places are sedulously and lengthily described, but the children hardly notice the countryside for the clues and seem chiefly intent on displaying their ignorance and referring to earlier adventures, a poor thin way of advertising. A one-line quotation from the Great Panjandrum, which shows three errors, gives an early indication of general ineptness and the drawings, by "Maz" aren't much help.

LAWTON, T. *Soccer the Lawton way.* Illus. 169 pp.
8 × 5. . . . . Nicholas Kaye 10/6

Now that Association Football has become an established world game and we have seen that Continental and South American countries can field the most brilliant combinations, more attention is being paid to the training and coaching. This book is full of tips, wrinkles and advice on every aspect of the game. With nearly fifty action drawings and twenty first-class photographs, it is likely to be widely used in schools. Nicholas Kaye maintains the excellent standard in book production he has set in his series of books on sports, games and athletics.

LEVY, M. *Painter's progress.* Illus. 168 pp.
8¼ × 5. . . . . Phoenix House 10/6

Before even the fate of television is settled, the effects of mass-communication press upon us for consideration. Now television adds painting to the repertory of subjects for popular instruction. In this case the audience is asked to act as well as appreciate, and this new stimulus to looking which may, as

intended, sharpen our powers of observation, must also tend to overload the visual life at the expense of the contemplative—an important point if one takes art seriously.

It is in fact significant that Mr. Levy fails to emphasize that, whereas a painting is a relatively easy achievement, a work of art is supremely difficult, involving like religion, profounder levels of the psyche than any to which his book appeals.

While this easy-going approach to the aesthetic mysteries pays them inadequate homage, Mr. Levy's technical advice (e.g. the simplification of equipment) is admirable.

A steep rise in the birth-rate of paintings is foreseeable.

MARSHALL, H. *Men against Everest.* Illus. 64 pp. 9 × 5½. . . . . Country Life 9/6

The successful climb to the summit of Everest was the climax of a series of attempts which began in 1921. Howard Marshall has reduced a mountain of literature about these expeditions to a mole-hill of manageable size and has written, specially for children, one of the best potted accounts of the Everest story I have read.

He describes, briefly but perceptively, and with the help of thirty photographs, the ten expeditions—the mysterious disappearance of Mallory and Irvine in 1924; the misguided but courageous solo attempt of Maurice Wilson in 1934; the Swiss failures of 1952, for example, The seven page description of the 1953 victory is an exceptionally fine summary.

Mr. Marshall's theme is the struggle of men against the mountain, their hardships and their determination, their triumphs and their comradeship. These, surely, are the aspects of the heroic fight against Everest that we should like children to recognise and admire.

MARTIN, N. *Young farmers in Denmark.* Illus. by S. Tresilian. 176 pp. 7¾ × 5¼. Macmillan 7/–

Few of the recent books on continental countries fill the chief requirement of making the reader want to take the same trip immediately, and the present sample is not one of the exceptions. Denmark is described as a charming country, full of interesting sights and kind people, but more interest would be created by reading a good guide-book than by this pedestrian fiction-tour. Ten members of Gaythorne's Young Farmers' Group have a fortnight of sightseeing, and of visiting farms on Mon, young people likable on the whole, but given to un-

inspired conversation, and more acquaintances than friends both to each other and to the reader. Information on farms and farm-homes is the most interesting, but it doesn't begin till nearly half-way through the book, the rest being devoted to the most superficial tourism. The deadening effect of footnotes translating and giving rather misleading phonetic pronounciation for every Danish remark, however trivial, is indiscribable. Adequate illustrations, a reasonable attractive format, and a well-intentioned text—but, oh, so flat!

MOGRIDGE, S. *New Forest mystery.* Illus. by Winslade. 230 pp. 7¾ × 5¼. . . Nelson 6/6

This sequel to *New Forest Adventure* is more concerned with swimming and boating than with ponies. Freddy's remarkable electronic inventions are used to recover stolen diamonds as well as lost outboard motors and we have forgers and secret passages thrown in. Suspense is well maintained within the limits of probability and there is sufficient fun in talk and action to remind the reader that the principal characters are still, only boys and girls.

MOOR, P. & HELM, A. L. *Out into space.* Illus. 144 pp. 7½ × 4¾. . . Museum Press 9/6

Out into Space is one of those usually uncomfortable hybrids of fact and fiction. Bob and Ann spend their holidays with an astronomer uncle and his friend, a rocket engineer. In between actual observation and discussion of the stars and planets they are taken in imagination on various journeys in rocket ships of the future. If there is nothing particularly new in the material, the method used is a quite successful change. There is some confusion on page 123 over the earliest observation of Jupiter's Great Red Spot, but the 'astronomical' figures are on the whole well handled and demonstrated.

NEEDHAM, V. *Adventures at Hampton Court.* Illus. by W. Nickless. 160 pp. 8 × 5¼. Lutterworth 7/6

The chief theme of this story is the pageant of history which has unfolded itself across the years at Britain's most perfect palace. It is, at the same time, a sort of double story, for Julian Messingham, a modern inhabitant of the building, has a gift of 'going back' so that he becomes intermittently a boy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, playing various roles, associated always with the great and powerful, scanning the story of the famous building from its ostentatious erection

by Wolsey to the sad escape of Charles I from its confining walls. Miss Needham's treatment is surprisingly successful and Mr. Nickless' drawings admirably convey the grace and dignity of the building.

NICKOLS, I. *Come motor racing with me.* Illus. by G. Lane. 160 pp. 7½ × 5. . . Muller 9/6

Boys who are mad about cars will read this book avidly, in spite of its unattractive production. It looks dull, has the most ordinary black and white pen drawings and the writing itself is pedestrian. Nevertheless it covers the whole of the motor racing scene and will give pleasure to the fans.

NIVEN, J. *Gipsy in Scarlet.* Illus. by R. Kennedy. 239 pp. 8 × 5¼. . . . . Faber 12/6

A story which begins with poaching and whisky smuggling in the Scottish glens and culminates in the exploits of the Scots Greys in the Crimean War ought to provide enough excitement for the healthy-minded reader, and so it does if incident alone counts for the most in a book of this sort. Yet there are moments which are unconvincing, not through improbability or mishandling but because of the author's inability to make his dialogue totally convincing in period as well as character. The Scots is hard enough to put over convincingly at the best of times and when not consistent it tends to pall. The orphaned Blair Mackenzie, forced to throw in his lot with his uncle in a timber-felling venture, becomes involved in his uncle's quarrel with a local factor and has eventually to join him in his outlawry. On the murder of that uncle, Blair joins the army in the belief that the murderer has sought escape in the same way. Here he encounters further interesting and stalwart characters and sees a bit of history in the making. Though it may creak a little at times the story is wholesome enough.

PALMER, J. *Going to museums.* Illus. 160 pp. 7½ × 5. . . . . Phoenix House 8/6

This new addition to the 'Excursion' series would seem to have been written in a great hurry, and is recommended more because there is so little available on the subject, and because of some stimulating ideas scattered through it, than for any merits of arrangements or comprehensive information. It reads well —a definite asset, but information often seems fragmentary. Space was obviously limited, and surprisingly wide-spread examples are given but it seems unfortunate that more could not

have been given to the fascinating subject of work behind the scenes and perhaps less to the author's comments, which are useful on ways of looking at material, but not so happy on the material itself. Young people familiar with the British Museum and the V. and A. will resent the almost total disregard of everything on the first floors and much on the ground floors, and those unfamiliar will gain little idea of the scope of their riches.

Similar lapses occur in the short descriptive list, at the end, otherwise a very welcome inclusion, where there is no mention of armour at the Tower or in the Wallace collection and nothing about Nelson relics at Greenwich, though these are mentioned under another heading in the text.

Something has to be left out in such a book, but the nature of the rejections is sometimes inexplicable especially as considerable space is given to such odd choices as Carlyle's house, though the author's reaction makes a point there. Perhaps she should let her enthusiasm show more often.

'SEA-LION' *The Falkland Islands mystery.* Illus. 200 pp. 7½ × 4¾. . . . Hutchinson 7/6

Severance of wireless communication with the remote Falklands is the prelude to a fast-moving, well-knit mystery story of spies and secret weapons and the threat of a Fourth Reich. This is not a book on a high level, as its title suggests, but on its particular level it is very good indeed. Lieutenants Peter Shelley and 'Snub Conway', and Carol Conway, move through it with their usual resourcefulness and courage.

TAYLOR, R. *Wings over Tewkesley.* Illus. 191 pp. 8 × 5¼. . . . . Bodley Head 9/6

This rousing school story about the impact of two American boys on an East Anglian Grammar School is just the stuff for other school boys up to the age of about fourteen. Lee and Mike, twin sons of a United States Air Force colonel, are sent by their father to a centuries-old school to learn the English way of life. The boys are nice, rather wild youngsters; the English boys are equally nice but slower in a stolid, East Anglian way. Each nationality finds that it has much to learn from the other. This part of the book is particularly well done, as anyone with experience of 'foreigners in our midst' will know. At first the American boys have to fight their way, making and learning from their mistakes. The English learn

too, and friendships are finally made after a certain amount of mutual battering. The rest of the incidents are fairly conventional—midnight feasts, climbing the forbidden tower, classroom rivalry, the inevitable finding of the missing charter, the equally inevitable saving from destruction of an old farmhouse scheduled for runway space required by the latest American super aircraft.

Altogether a decent lively book with a topical slant and a real effort to present the difficulties of both sides in the American services 'invasion'. But when will school-story authors learn that most schoolmasters today do not talk like stock characters of about fifty years ago.

TREASE, G. *Black Banner abroad.* 209 pp. 8 × 5½.
Heinemann 8/6

Mr. Trease has many good theories about the material, neglected by most authors, that should interest modern readers in their 'teens, and what is more, he has the skill to use those theories to build an enjoyable story. The newest addition to his Bannermere series incorporates his beliefs on boy-girl and teacher-pupil relationships, and the elimination of easy prejudices and caricatures often applied to things intellectual or foreign, and these high aims, far from interfering with the pleasure of the book, help to keep it fresh and lively. The Black Banner Players are invited to bring their *Romeo and Juliet* to Provence, and Bill Melbury, now in his last year at Grammar School, describes this first trip abroad with zest. An articulate and amusing boy, he makes each step of the journey clear and each new discovery delightful. He sees his teachers with humour tinged with respect and a growing appreciation of their point of view, but cannot be so detached about the coquettish French girl staying with his hosts. His pre-occupation with Gigi and the production of the play in an open-air Greek theatre does not prevent his taking advantage of his new surroundings. The story is given shape by the search for an unknown peasant-woman, for Bill and his friends have promised to return a sum of money, stolen from her by a country workman in their Lakeland district, when he was escaping from war-time France. This is not a disguised travelogue, but a neatly-constructed story with a charming background evocatively described. The reader is left with a desire to visit Provence, some knowledge of foreign

ways and travel, and perhaps a more just appraisal of such diverse subjects as teachers, members of the lower Fifth, the Continental Sunday, art, the theatre, and mild flirtations.

TREECE, H. *The Eagles have flown.* Illus. by C. Price. 168 pp. $8\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{8}$. . Bodley Head 9/6

In spite of recent research, much is still indefinite and as much completely unknown about the historic King Arthur, and it seems a pity that Mr. Treece could not have used his material on the period and his interpretation of Arthur in an adult novel instead of presenting such a definite portrait as his Artos to young readers as the real Arthur. England has too few heroes of such stature to allow the most legendary and mystical to be reduced to the level of a semi-Romanized barbarian war-lord, and Mr. Treece's opening explanations are too weak to prevent the average child's acceptance of his glib "proof" of the probable origin of the sword in the stone and Arthur's sleep.

He does succeed in making reasonably clear the confusion of factions warring in Britain in the late 5th century, and also makes their motivation fairly clear, while leaving no doubt about the savagery of their methods. The boy Festus makes a poor hero, however, belying his Roman training and early protestations of eagerness to help his country for he shows neither constancy nor courage, and not much common sense. The help he gives Artos is largely accidental, and his companion or slave, the Jutish boy Wulf, is far more appealing and spirited.

Artos makes an imposing picture, with his missing tooth and fingers, tattoed cheeks and braided hair (and a horse six hands higher than other mounts!) but he is made unnecessarily crude, even for those hard times, and it is disconcerting to have his harsh cruelty excused as a necessary characteristic in one scene, and later to see him behave in quite another fashion in a similar situation. The three kings of the West are hardly more than lay-figures, nor do the illustrations give them more substance; the prototype of Kay has more life but a short one, not joining Arthur till late and being killed soon after, too soon to provide much of a legend. Even in bringing Arthur down to earth (and sometimes lower) Mr. Treece has had to leave Merlin a mystery. One wonders how much warranty there is for the very public murder of Arthur given in the epilogue. The many guesses (and exclamation points) in the

notes at the end, and the lack of dates for most of the books suggested for further reading, make his scholarship all the more suspect and his attempt to make Artos a credible Arthur more deplorable.

VALE, E. *Churches.* Illus. by J. Mansbridge. 80 pp. 8¼ × 5½. . . . . Batsford 7/6

BROWN, R. A. *Castles.* Illus. by J. Mansbridge. 80 pp. 8¼ × 5½. . . . . Batsford 7/6

These are the first two volumes in a new series of Junior Heritage Books. They are both crammed with information and illustrations, and as with many a Batsford publication, it is the latter which catch the eye. The photographs look dull, mainly because of the hard paper they are printed on, but John Mansbridge's colour and black and white illustrations are superbly exciting. Those youngsters interested in architecture and archaeology, and their numbers are increasing, will revel in these works.

VEVERS, H. G. *The British seashore.* Illus. 160 pp. 8¾ × 5½. . . . . Routledge 10/6

STREET, P. *The Seashore for boys and girls.* Illus. 116 pp. 9 × 6 cloth back. . . E.U.P. 7/6

FORD, R. L. .E *British reptiles and amphibians.* Illus. 88 pp. 8 × 5. . . . . Black 6/6

BULLOUGH, W. & H. *Introducing animals with backbones.* Illus. 72 pp. 8½ × 6½. Methuen 8/6

The British Seashore by one of our best known writers on nature lore appears to be intended for the older reader but is, in fact, by virtue of the ease and clarity of its style, of equal use with the following book on the same subject. A wider range of photographs could have been used with advantage as being so much more attractive than the excellent drawings which are plentiful.

The Seashore for Boys and Girls is, as the title and its external appearance suggests, aimed at a somewhat younger reader than Mr. Vevers' book. It is the latest volume in the deservedly popular Junior Teach Yourself Books. It is comprehensive, authoritative and very well illustrated. It does not write down to its younger audience—indeed it requires some concentration to absorb its meaty chapters. It will be read mostly by boys of 14 upwards.

British Reptiles and Amphibians is the latest addition to the Young Naturalists Series. It covers its ground adequately and has excellent photographs.

Introducing Animals with Backbones one of the simplest in style, and best illustrated, of the many books on its subject, follows a previous book on the Invertebrates. Working from the simplest forms of fishes through amphibians, birds and mammals to man, the authors have placed sufficient emphasis on the more unusual types to sustain interest among readers from 10 to 12.

WHITLOCK, P. *Comp. All day long.* . O.U.P. 21/-

Everyone's favourite anthology is one that lurks at the back of the memory and has yet to find its way into print. The love of poetry is such a personal thing that no one else's choice will be entirely acceptable. With that one reservation it must be acknowledged that Miss Whitlock has done her job excellently. This is not the kind of anthology which gathers companionably together a host of old favourites; and that is an admirable idea with a child audience, for the readers of this book will not have had time to make favourites. Most of these poems will be quite unfamiliar to children; not one in fifty, thank heaven, will have been met in the classroom. They are fresh, challenging, contemporary. Few anthologies, for adults or children, have been so rich in modern poems; and one cannot but envy the compiler for finding a publisher so willing to include copyright material. This feature of the book presumably accounts for its very high price, a price which will unhappily keep it from many eager hands. A pity this, for the book provides a valuable contrast to the conventional *Golden Treasury* and the highly personal *Come Hither,* and it would be good to think that every child who loves poetry should own all three. No library or school can afford to neglect *All Day Long,* but poetry is essentially something to be possessed, not borrowed for a brief period.

The book which is ingeniously arranged to follow the passage of a day, is excellently equipped with indexes and has a series of brief biographical notes which are scrappy and not invariably accurate. It is most beautifully printed, and Miss Hassall has done a few wood-engravings which are so lovely that one wishes there were ten times as many. Altogether a book of great distinction. If only it cost half a guinea!

FOR THE INTERMEDIATE LIBRARY

BRODERMAN, F. & MCPARTLIN, G. A. *Ski-ing for beginners.* Illus. 88 pp. 7½ × 5. . Bell 10/6

Before the beginner has reached the stage of his first short downhill run on the nursery slopes he will have read 58 of the 88 pages of this book. By the time he has learned to stop or turn on these simple little slopes he will have read 66 pages. All of this he would have accomplished during his first morning with his class with the instructor. It is therefore doubtful whether this book can be considered of much value. The author lays far too much stress and devotes far too much space to preliminary exercises. The remaining twenty pages will take the novice several weeks or even months to master and he certainly will not master these more advanced techniques from any book. The right book for the beginner has yet to be written.

COCHRANE, L. *Social work for Jill.* 132 pp. 7½ × 5. Chatto & Windus 7/6

There is a bold kaleidoscopic picture here of the experience, training, and temperament needed for social work. The author has a knowledge of character and Jill the heroine is convincing in her feelings, moods, and aspirations. The bold facade is however, only knit together by a story of the usual weak melodramatic formula—gangs and thieves and youthful amateur detection. The style too is somewhat bare and rough and words are strung together to give at times a jerky hindered movement. The varied scenes are nevertheless faithfully given, and home, youth club, factory, children's home, and college receive sympathetic analysing treatment.

COLLINDER, P. *A History of marine navigation.* Illus. 195 pp. 9 × 6. ... ... Batsford 21/–

This translation, by Maurice Michael, from the Swedish proves a mine of fascinating historical information not only about the science of marine navigation but of human endeavour as well. It does its best also to tell the story and explain the essentials of navigation in words which should be intelligible to senior pupils or adolescent library borrowers, whether they have a scientific bent or not. The author brings together a variety of sources, some of which might be considered recon-

dite, but he achieves his main object through his constant adherence to his idea of telling his story through the achievements of *men*. In scope the book moves from the discoveries of pre-Biblical peoples to the electronic wonders of the present day, but at whatever stage the story is, it is personal and alive. What the author does, in fact, is to simplify and humanise material which in Hogben's *Science for the Citizen* occupies over three hundred packed pages. The fifty illustrations are of the best quality.

EDWARDS, M. *Joan goes farming.* Illus. 7½ × 5. Bodley Head 7/6

Another 'Career' book. Joan Seymour suddenly decides that nursing is not her line; she would like an outdoor life. She goes for a year on a general farm working with a fretful farmer's wife, a farmer who turns out to be less feather-bedded than at first seems and a couple of kindly and knowledgeable agricultural workers. Joan learns the way of cattle and decides to specialise in dairy work.

Miss Edwards cannot fail to write well about the countryside which she loves. Joan's modest everyday round on the farm is easily set down. Such facts as are given are all quite sound. But as a 'Career' book there is perhaps a lack of balance. Too much of Joan's family background; too little variation of colour in the farm scenes; a feeling of monotony more than of hopeful struggle, and the facts of birth and death, so inevitable in farm life and so full of wonder when first faced, are rather lightly touched on for a book of this type. As coming from Monica Edwards Joan's story is a little disappointing.

ELTON, LORD. *General Gordon.* Illus. 447 pp. 8½ × 5½. . . . . Collins 25/–

The dust of conflict which raged round Gordon and the Gladstone government which first sent him to the Sudan, and then, in the eyes of most people, abandoned him there to his death, has long since settled, and a less heated assessment of the merits of Gordon has been long overdue. Lord Elton would seem to have provided it; and in default of the discovery of fresh evidence, and that is unlikely, this biography will almost certainly become the standard work on the career of this unusual soldier.

Lord Elton has been able to draw on unpublished letters, and it seems unlikely therefore that much more will be added to the knowledge of Gordon's life. The book is solid, restrained and charitable in its judgments even of the politicians. Difficulties presented to the official mind by Gordon's unorthodoxies, and, let us face it !—his occasional incalculable acts, are given their full weight in excusing failures to make adequate and effective use of this brilliant irregular. The result is, of course, to make the unspoken indictment of the official mind all the more telling in the end. And it is the end that matters, for the plain truth is that Gordon's whole career was building up to the climax at Khartoum, and it is an inevitable difficulty, which even Lord Elton's skill does not entirely surmount, that Gordon, during his long periods of virtual unemployment was something of a crank and a little of a bore. His genius lay in action, and it is to that genius that the tempo of the book quickens. Although its author in no way overweights the Sudan episodes, it is in Khartoum, where Gordon's high courage, faith, and serenity lifted the tragedy out of the level of squalid political manoeuvring, that the reader is held enthralled. This immensely fine book contains, of course, much more. There is, for example, the extraordinary contrast between the shifty casuistry of the politicians, Gladstone included, and the sound common sense of the Queen; and one service that it should do is to end once and for all the excuse put forward for the government that Gordon exceeded his instructions. It is probable, then, that this wise and generous book will give us the last word on its subject. One could hardly imagine its being more adequately spoken.

FISHER, H. *The Story of the Sadler's Wells Ballet.* Illus. 64 pp. 8 × 5½. . . . Black 6/–

A brief history of this famous Company since its foundation in 1931. The growth of the Company is traced chronologically—its repertoire and the famous names connected with it. Thirty-one photographs help to complete a useful little book for balletomanes.

GOVER, A. *How I teach better cricket.* Illus. 96 pp. 7½ × 5. . . . . Muller 10/6

Even the enthusiast has to admit that there have been too many books on cricket in recent years. Always the game most written about, it has inspired more writing than ever since the

end of the war. But this book is slightly different, in that it is about coaching, and it is published at a most opportune time, because the M.C.C. Group Coaching Scheme is now operating. Gover has played an important part in this Scheme and the book is evidently based on his practical experience of coaching. It is written simply and clearly and the twenty photographs are admirable.

LOWNDES, J. S- *The Conti story.* 256 pp. 7½ × 5.
Collins 8/6

Italia Conti would seem a better subject for a psychological study than for a juvenile biography, judging by this treatment, which carefully enumerates her virtues, but makes her less attractive qualities more vivid. Whatever her real character, she emerges as a woman with a flair for selecting good teaching and acting material, but even more as an exploiter, of her own charm, her family's abilities, her patrons' and helpers' adoration, even "her children's" talents. Seemingly motivated by family loyalty, she sacrificed her brothers and sisters as well as herself to the cause. Her ruthless ambition and relentless use of everyone, especially the girls whose acting careers were ignored when she found they could solace her loneliness or help in the office, make her sound an unedifying heroine, and the detailing of her many moves and trips, where, when, and with whom, make her a dull one. More information about the school and its teaching methods might have justified much, but they remain a mystery, and their founder remains suspect.

MONCREIFFE, I. & POTTINGER, D. *Simple custom.*
Illus. 64 pp. 9¾ × 7. . . . Nelson 10/6

The light-hearted and learned authors of *Simple heraldry* have tackled a larger and even more complex field, that of mankind's manners and customs. If the new book is less satisfactory than its predecessor this is inherent in the subject. The authors have made a brave shot at giving unity to the vast jumble of material which might go under the heading of 'Custom'; the unity comes indeed from the treatment rather than the material. The cheerful irreverence which characterizes these authors' method appeals mainly to adults; moreover, parents, and others, may well bear in mind that many customs derive from sex!

The Oxford Junior Encyclopedia. Vol. 12. *The Arts.*
Illus. 480 pp. 9¾ × 7½. . . O.U.P. 30/–

This excellent encyclopedia, such an invaluable half-way house between The Children's Encyclopedia and such comprehensive works as Chambers or the Britannica, is nearing completion. There are, we believe, only three more volumes to come including the Index. The present volume as fully illustrated as ever is as comprehensive and as clear and interesting in its text as the previous volumes. That some surprises in regard to the attention devoted to certain subjects more than to others are evident is inevitable in this as in all other such works and no doubt in due course a few errors will have been discovered. The fact remains that this is probably the most useful available work for the Modern Secondary schools and for all but the sixth form in grammar schools.

PITT, F. *My squirrels.* Illus. 96 pp. 7½ × 4¾.
Country Life 8/6

Miss Pitt's great gift of intimately befriending animals is shown to the full in this book. We read here of the families of squirrels that were reared in her house and given the freedom of the place. They lived in such close company with the author that all the fascinating detail of their habits and behaviour was observed and the reader has the advantage of that observation in this lively and absorbing record. The author's interest in the animal world is pursued in a relentless and singleminded manner and while we cannot all go to such lengths to gain such knowledge and friendship we can be grateful to Miss Pitt for her enthusiasm. There is a slight tendency to repeat and recapitulate unnecessarily, but otherwise the style is competent and clear enough. The photographs taken by the author are excellent and add to the appeal of the book. The subject matter, style, and general format are suitable for the older child and the adult reader.

SHORTEN, M. *Squirrels.* Illus. 212 pp. 8 × 5½.
Collins 15/–

Let it be said at once that Miss Shorten's exhaustive monograph for the *New Naturalist* series is destined for the shelves of the Reference Library rather than for the general reader. Unless the reader is more than usually persistent or better informed than the average he cannot expect to enjoy the very detailed chapters dealing with the history and distribution of red and grey squirrels in Britain.

Even the more general chapters on characteristics, activity, breeding and control need substantial digestive powers. To say so is to praise the book rather than condemn it. It is as thorough as the ten years of research which went to its making and as comprehensive as the thirty-two photographs, twenty-two maps and drawings and the five-page bibliography which complete the text. Miss Shorten writes clearly and her grasp of her subject is obvious from the first page.

TUFFS, J. E. *Teach yourself conjuring.* Illus. 182 pp. 7 × 4½. . . English Universities Press 6/–

Mr. Tuffs declares that "no one becomes a conjurer except by desire, consequently there is an enthusiasm and a bond between magicians of all ages and creeds the world over." With the aid of this book one can join the throng of those who delight in making "magic." Both text and diagrams are admirably lucid and it should fulfil its avowed purpose. The book maintains the truly high standard of this series which covers almost "everything under the sun."

WHITTAM, G. *The Whale hunters.* Illus. by the author. 182 pp. 8 × 5¼. . . . Bell 11/6

A dying industry seems to be gaining a new lease of life in juvenile fiction judging by the number of recent books which have dealt directly or indirectly with the history of whaling. In a more or less plausible tale, divided into three parts and dealing with succeeding generations of a whaling family, Mr. Whittam contrives to tell the history of whaling in both northern and southern oceans in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If the details of the story itself are not particularly new, the author certainly manages to introduce most of the matters which have controlled and influenced the technique and rewards of whaling from the human and commercial viewpoints. The author says the book "grew" round his illustrations and this is not difficult to believe since these illustrations are exceptionally graphic and carefully conceived. The book is not lacking in adventure, though some of the incidents may seem contrived, and is well worth the reading whether the aim of the reader is information or romance.

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